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Local graffiti artist: 'Book Thrower', in Yaumatei, Hong Kong, 2016. Photograph by the author.

The tipping point for artistic alternatives in East Asia

“Would this be the time for a permanent social change?” and “Could alternative artistic and creative practices facilitate the transformation?”, are two questions posed by the spray painted image of a masked protestor pitching a translated copy of Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* in Yaumatei, Hong Kong.¹ Created by a local graffiti artist during the ‘Fishball Revolution’ in February 2016, this larger-than-life stencil adapts and builds upon the original visual message made by British street artist Banksy in Bethlehem in 2005.² In Banksy’s work, commonly known as the *Flower Thrower*, a protestor is armed with a bouquet of colorful flowers to promote peace, instead of grenades, rocks or Molotov cocktails to be thrown at adversaries.³ However, in Hong Kong’s version, the *Book Thrower*, the protestor is equipped with the knowledge that a sudden

but profound transformation of paradigms, policies and practices is possible when, as Gladwell suggests, “the moment of critical mass”, is reached.

Echoing the queries put forward by the stenciled protestor, this special issue examines the artistic and creative practices emerging in East Asia and how they are gaining prominent status, not only in the art scene, but in society as a whole. Rather than mirroring social transformations, these groundbreaking practices initiate thought-provoking alternatives for both art and life. They have become instrumental for bringing forward new subjectivities and reshaping the intrinsic values of social and cultural well-being.

Minna Valjakka

